

**City of Belmont
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING AUGUST 1, 2012
MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the Belmont Parks & Recreation Commission of August 1, 2012 was called to order at 7:01 p.m. at the Belmont City Hall Council Chambers.

I. ROLL CALL

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Kevin Sullivan, Vice Chair Wright, Commissioner (C) Block, Eric Sullivan, Bortoli, and Wong. Youth Commissioner (YC) Bartee arrived shortly after roll call.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: C Cheechov, YC Zakeri

STAFF PRESENT: Parks and Recreation Director (PRD) Gervais and Secretary (S) Saggau

Chair Kevin Sullivan noted this was the first televised Parks & Recreation Commission meeting. He thanked the Mayor and City Council for authorizing the recording of these meetings. Chair Sullivan reviewed the purpose of the Commission and explained the meeting process.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

C Wright moved, seconded by C Block to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of June 6, 2012.

Vote: In Favor: Wright, Block, Eric Sullivan & Wong
 Opposed: None
 Abstain: Kevin Sullivan & Bortoli

The Commission questioned if the four votes would pass the motion. PRD Gervais said that this vote would not provide a majority of the Commission to pass and the minutes were tabled to the next meeting.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

C Bortoli reported on the Senior Advisory Committee meeting. He noted the seniors are still happy with the lunch program. Plans are being made for renovations at the Senior/Community Center.

YC Bartee arrived at 7:06 p.m.

C Sullivan noted trail work continues in the Water Dog Lake open space area although digging has stopped until rains return to soften the soil.

PRD Gervais noted the Fall Activity Guide is out and it offers a lot of activities for families.

PRD Gervais announced the first Movie Night in the Park is scheduled for Friday, August 3 and the movie will be The Lorax. There will also be a movie at the park on Friday, August 31 and Winnie the Pooh will be showing. In the fall movies will be moved to the library and shown in the Taube Room.

PRD Gervais stated that Neighborhood Night Out will be held on Tuesday, August 7, 2012. Several events will be held at park sites providing an opportunity for neighbors to meet each other.

IV. AGENDA AMENDMENTS

None.

V. OLD BUSINESS

a. McDougal Park

PRD Gervais reviewed the history of McDougal Park and the issues on the limited access, park maintenance and improvements to the park. He noted there was an Ad-Hoc Committee in the past that reviewed these issues but it was unsuccessful in changing the exclusive use time for the school. The field at McDougal Park is used by youth sports and the city has met with youth sports representatives to work on scheduling at the site to give more of the available time to the community.

The City recently improved the picnic area at this park. The City would like to add a bulletin board at the site to be used to communicate with the community and could be used to list the park schedule and the youth sports and tournament schedules. Staff would like to replace some underperforming trees at the site and improve the landscaping. He noted an unsafe playground was removed and was not replaced because it was in a bad location. The City would like to add some type of play feature at the park. The idea of a walking track has been suggested for this site.

PRD Gervais explained it is unlikely the access easement will ever be changed. Efforts to do so would require a lot of legal work and funds. The City is working on better balance of use for the youth sports and the community, and to improve the site.

PRG Gervais responded to Commission questions:

- The three softball fields are regularly used simultaneously during the softball season.
- The demand for field space continues to increase. Some fields were lost due to the school construction. AYSO may have to turn away some youths this year due to the shortage of field space.

Chuck Horton stated he does not think Charles Armstrong School will ever give up the deal they have and that a decision should be made on this issue. If the decision is not to pursue the park he proposed finding a solution outside the box and suggested selling the Sports Complex land and buying the Davis Drive property and creating a park there. He spoke in favor of installing a play structure at McDougal Park.

Debbie Vielbaum, Director of Admissions and Community Relations for Charles Armstrong School explained Charles Armstrong School is a non-profit that specializes in children with special needs. Over 1/3 of the children enrolled receive financial aid scholarships. Currently, there are 16 students that are from San Carlos and Belmont. She noted the property was purchased in 1989 and they entered in the CUP (Conditional Use Permit) which restricts campus hours to specific hours. The City did agree to restrict use of the park during school hours so that there is no disruption to the students. The School wants to work harmoniously with the City and have allowed use of their picnic tables and overflow parking when there are tournaments at the park.

Peggy Allen requested that a tot lot be installed at McDougal Park. She presented pictures of a tot lot she proposed and suggested a location in the park. She noted a concern that, in her observation, the school does not use the field that much and would be interested in a study observing the field use. She also expressed concern that the sign at the school states the Police would be called if people go onto the school grounds and suggested a separate sign for the school and the neighborhood.

Barry Lake stated he is not against the Charles Armstrong School and thinks they are a fine institution that provides a great service. He expressed concerns with the access agreements between the city and the school. He noted that taxes contribute to the upkeep of this park and the school is enjoying exclusive access during the most of the useful daylight hours. He proposed a solution of fencing off an area of the park so that the public can have access to the park. He was in support of adding a tot lot for the children in the neighborhood. He also expressed support of adding a walking trail and suggested including a trail into the open space area on the San Carlos side. He added he would be glad to participate in a Committee.

Stephen Cann - expressed concern with access to this park during daylight hours. He noted there are new young families in the neighborhood and a park would enhance their neighborhood. He was in favor of a walking trail. He requested this item stay on the agenda so access is resolved. He spoke in support of a Committee and would be willing to participate in it.

Robert Mayer – stated he recognizes Charles Armstrong's needs for a secure physical education facility and the needs of the sports community. He expressed concern with the very limited public access and the playing field design that limits neighborhood use. He noted the 1992 Master Plan designated the park as a neighborhood park and amenities were supposed to be added but never were. He stated the recent improvements are inadequate and in bad condition. He asked the Commission to join with the residents to form a Task Force to create a solution.

CC Kevin Sullivan thanked the public for their comments. He requested the Commission focus on access comments first.

C Wong noted he reviewed Resolution #6072 and it does not include any sunset clause to terminate or review the agreement. He stated he did not see any legal standing to ask the school to change it. He added the school has expressed their needs and does not see any reason for them to change it and suggested moving on with other issues that are more feasible.

C Bortoli stated all schools are concerned about access to school grounds to anyone other than a student or school employee during school hours and did not see any reason to change that. He spoke in support of tightening up the useable hours from the sports groups to create more available time for the community.

C Block said the signage at the park is not very clear on useable hours and that a bulletin board would be helpful in communicating this information.

C Eric Sullivan agreed that access is a difficult area as safety is critical for a school.

C Wright said she was intrigued by the suggestion to carve out an area of the park to provide more access but looking at the map she thinks it is unlikely to work considering the needs of the children. She would like to look at what can be done during the times it is available.

CC Kevin Sullivan stated that that Charles Armstrong wants to be a good neighbor but it is clear that they do not want to change access for the safety of their students. He agreed with the other Commissioners that it would be hard to get past the access issues.

CC Kevin Sullivan requested the Commission provide their comments on use and improvements:

C Bortoli noted that the sports groups are not interested in retaining the fields if they do not need them and thinks more use time could be available to the neighborhood.

C Wright said she was interested in the tot lot diagrams but noted the area by the picnic area may have more space available for play. She spoke in favor of exploring natural play elements as they do not require as large a fall zone. She was also interested in trail options.

C Wong spoke in favor of a tot lot but noted the suggested location may have some safety concerns. He proposed a joint venture be suggested with Charles Armstrong for upgrades at the site.

C Block agreed there is changing demographics in Belmont with more young families which justify the need for a tot lot. He questioned if the fields could be reorganized or restructured to gain some space for a play area. He noted if the school was never sold and remained a public school site there would have been similar access limitations.

CC Kevin Sullivan stated the City should address the field use to see if more time could be made available for public use but acknowledged there is a lack of field space and he would not want to

support excessively limiting the current play time. He also spoke in support of adding a play structure at the site which could be completed in the maintenance budget. He noted if changes are made to the field or trails are added the project would be much larger and would need to be on the City Council's priority list.

C Bortoli questioned if a Committee should be formed to sort through some of the issues. He added this Committee would not discuss the access to the site during school hours as it is not going to happen. They could discuss maximizing field use and availability of the site for the community and options for a play structure.

C Wong noted that discussions on access were not likely to be productive and made the following motion:

C Wong moved, seconded by CC Kevin Sullivan, that the Commission not pursue access issues anymore unless there is something dramatic that comes up to change the current conditions.

C Block stated he was not comfortable making a motion to stop discussion and provided a substitute motion and C Wong withdrew his motion.

C Block moved, seconded by CC Kevin Sullivan, it is the position of this Commission that discussions about access during school hours are not likely to be fruitful and are not encouraged.

Vote: In Favor: Block, Eric Sullivan, Kevin Sullivan, Wright, Bartee and Wong
Opposed: Bortoli

The Commission discussed creating an Ad-Hoc Committee but decided to ask the stakeholders involved to create a group to discuss use and upgrades and invite Commissioners to attend their meetings.

b. Cipriani Dog Park Project Update

PRD Gervais reported on the progress at the Cipriani Dog Park. He noted that construction started in June 2012 and has been on schedule and within budget. Pictures of improvements were presented. PRD Gervais asked the Commission if they would like to have a Re-Opening Open House at the park. It was decided to have an open house in September and staff will check with the Commission on available Friday nights.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

CC Kevin Sullivan noted a Public Comment slip was received and he provided an opportunity for the individual to speak.

Johanna Wolgart expressed concern with safety on the trails in Water Dog Lake and Belmont Canyon areas due to mountain bike riders. She noted most of the improvements at these sites are for bike use and not good for pedestrian use. She questioned who this natural resource is

available for and who is safeguarding this use. She said cyclists have not only tailored it to be a mountain bike park but an extreme mountain bike park.

The Commission took a recess from 8:38-8:45 p.m.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Barrett Community Center Update

PRD Gervais reviewed the history of Barrett Community Center (BCC). The City acquired BCC from the School District and the site can only be used for Parks & Recreation purposes. The facility has deferred maintenance issues. Artists moved into two wings, maintained, and made changes to the facility. Belmont Community Players moved into the theater and made a lot of improvements to it. The quad, consisting of four classrooms that were added in the 1960's, has been used for recreation programs.

PRD Gervais noted a lot of activities are offered at BCC including dance, theater, and after-school programs. Camp and education opportunities are also offered at BCC. The Belmont Community Learning Center occupies three classrooms at BCC and provides a state-certified preschool for 75 children. The artist's studios have been reduced from 26 to 10. The athletic fields are used by the youth sports organizations.

PRD Gervais reviewed the current use of the classrooms and the plans for revisions and future use of these rooms. In the near future staff plans to address some of the deferred maintenance issues to make the site more useable for classes. Improvements needed include adding signage, painting, heating, resurfacing of the parking lot. Security also needs to be improved at Barrett and gates may be added to enclose the interior courtyards at night. Hours have been set at the facility to get better control of the space.

PRD Gervais listed the short term plans for BCC:

- Find partners to run recreation programs
- Maintain 10 artist studios
- Maintain Pre-School Program
- Generate Revenue
- Public adoption of Barrett

PRD Gervais noted the long term (5-20 years) plan is to plan for a new community center. This could be done with an Ad-Hoc Committee or the City Council could appoint a Blue Ribbon Committee. He noted this is not a small task and would be a major planning effort.

PRD Gervais answered questions from the Commission.

Mike Davis suggested improved signage at Barrett Community Center that provides information on the programs and events available at BCC. He also spoke in support of surveying the entire community.

Geoff Fernald, past president of the Barrett Homeowners Association, said he was involved in a bond issue that did not get sufficient votes to purchase the Barrett site and he encouraged the City Council to acquire Barrett School. He also expressed concern with the loss of artists at the Center.

C Bortoli noted the Commission has looked at BCC in the past and have been reluctant to start looking at improvements since there were no funds available for it. He added since it is unlikely the funds will be available to rebuild it there needs to be a balance to make improvements to make it serviceable for the near future that will meld into the long term plan.

C Wright stated it would be helpful to get the services of someone that is good at helping groups with a visioning process for the future of the BCC.

C Wong said it is a good idea to imagine what the possibilities are but it is important to prioritize with the desires of the community.

PRD Gervais clarified that the short term goals are to fix what needs to be fixed. The long term goal would be to either refurbish or rebuild BCC.

C Eric Sullivan stated the near term plans for BCC improvements will provide immediate benefits and that is a clear win. The leap to spend \$10-20 million dollars on the buildings is a big step. He suggested that there be more focus outside of the buildings and beautifying and utilizing the outdoor area. He said would like to get input from the community and have a group look at improvements that can be accomplished with a budget that is affordable.

CC Kevin Sullivan said he is pleased with the small steps being taken now to increase use at BCC. He agreed that affordable ways need to be found to improve the outdoor common areas at the site to get the community to use BCC which could promote support to do a bigger project.

C Block said he agrees with the short term goals. He expressed interest in the long term goals for that site and suggested approaching the City Council to see if funds could be budgeted to hire a professional to assist with some ideas and perhaps build some models to get the community's response.

The Commission discussed the next steps for BCC. Staff will prepare a survey to reach out to the community for their input. An Ad-Hoc Committee consisting of Commissioners Block, Wong and Eric Sullivan was formed. PRD Gervais will provide interested Commissioners with tours of the Center.

Geoff Fernald commented that integrating the two concepts of the Twin Pines Center and the Barrett Community Center should be considered in the vision.

Norm Land agreed that the message should be to promote BCC and that the short term improvements could increase participation and help create the vision for the long term plans.

VII. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

A. Questions and Comments

PRD Gervais reported the following:

- Plans for improvements to the Senior/Community Center that include painting, new carpeting and new furniture are being made. Some grant money was received for this project. A donation from the estate of William Pearce will be also be used for these improvements if the City Council approves accepting the donation.
- Pending City Council approval, the City will hire a company to look at energy use at the library as the energy use there is higher than expected.
- The first Tree Board meeting will be held in September or October.
- PRD Gervais attended a combined Homeview & Sterling Downs Neighborhood Association meeting to discuss trees. The City will focus on these neighborhoods with the Free Tree Program.
- The Buckeye Picnic Area was improved with a donation and assistance from the Rotary Club.
- The Staff Report format has changed and examples were included in the packet.
- The online fee for class registrations has been changed to a flat fee of \$2.50 per transaction.
- The Davey Glen Ad-Hoc Committee met and the next step will be to create a small model of the park design. Commissioners will have an opportunity to look at the model before it is presented at the Commission meeting.

B. Future Agenda Items

Belmont Sports Complex
General Plan Update
CPRS Conference
Davey Glen Park
Trail Safety
Survey

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Jonathan Gervais
Parks & Recreation Director